

Setting the record straight on Our Voice Our Hamilton public engagement

Are we based in Ottawa?

Yes. We also have team members in Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto.

How much are we being paid for this project?

We responded to a Request for Proposal (RFP) publicly issued by the City of Hamilton to plan, implement and report on a project to engage citizens in a conversation about City infrastructure and services. We were awarded the contract in April 2012. Since that time, we have been working with the City of Hamilton to build the internal capacity of the City to engage citizens in a meaningful way, and to prepare materials, plans and tools for the conversation.

The year-long contract awarded for \$376,000 included activities such as: internal training, development and implementation of an engagement plan, website, mobile app, creation of the online CityScape game, design and delivery of a series of face-to-face community events and final reporting and analysis. This amount includes consulting fees and costs.

What about the question we asked about HSR?

Dialogue Partners asked a participant on Twitter to "clarify what HSR is, so that we can accurately capture your comment." Our intent was to clarify the multiple tweets the individual made in order to be certain we understood his input. We want to acknowledge how asking this questions was perceived, and understand it was seen as not knowing anything about Hamilton. We are very sorry for this. As another example we received a comment about City services making reference to HAC. We didn't ask for clarification because of the reaction generated by our other question, and we have made the assumption that the participant is talking about Hamilton Animal Control, but we do not know if this is correct.

What about the pictures from other communities named Hamilton posted on the Pinterest board?

The site was initially created in August 2012 in advance of initially planned project launch in September, which was subsequently delayed. The site has therefore been "live" but not promoted since that time. Most Pinterest sites indicate who posted the image (if they were not posted by the pinterest page creator) but when you review the project board (or screen shots of the board) this is not the case and we don't know why. The other images note the source of the image (i.e. the website they came from) and under normal circumstances we could test the page to understand why this is happening but given the public nature of this tool and the questions raised about two of the photos, we deleted all photos in order to start fresh. We have sent an inquiry to Pinterest Support to ask them if they can help determine the origins of the pins on the page. This was their first (very unhelpful) response:

Pinterest Support, Jan 10 18:56 (PST):

Hi Stephani,

If you're unsure why you're seeing a pin in your feed, you can troubleshoot here:

<https://support.pinterest.com/entries/22070332>

We request that you use our help articles to get the information you need as quickly as possible. If there's

additional information you'd like our team to know, you can reply to this message.

Happy pinning! - The Pinterest Team

We have sent an additional inquiry to Pinterest. We will report the results of that inquiry. If Dialogue Partners posted the pictures, we will take responsibility for this, and we look forward to the possibility of being able to get to the bottom of this.

Some people are organizing their own process and meeting to talk about an online tool to use for the conversation. Isn't that a better idea?

A meaningful, inclusive process is critical. The process we have designed for *Our Voice. Our Hamilton.* is inclusive, focused on a rich and thoughtful conversation about City services designed to gather input in ways that work for all Hamiltonians. We stand by the process we have designed and believe it is the right one for the City. We believe it is critically important that the process engage with ALL Hamiltonians from all walks of life, and from many different experiences and demographics. Our process will do that. We know a group has organized over the use of a different online tool – we're very familiar with this tool but we know that one cool tool doesn't reach everyone, allow for respectful discourse, take the conversation beyond a surface level or increase understanding. One online tool isn't a replacement to a meaningful conversation for all Hamiltonians.

It was reported the Dialogue Partners team were staying in a Toronto hotel, afraid to come to Hamilton. Is that true?

No, that is not true.

Did you post a picture of an Ottawa bike path and say it was Hamilton?

No. The picture of a bike path was a picture of Hamilton with the Mayor and a Councillor on bikes.

It was tweeted that Dialogue Partners and some people you work with are based in New York. Is that true?

No.

Is Dialogue Partners a “stranger to competence”?

Dialogue Partners is known internationally for our good work in public engagement on complex and complicated issues. We “specialize in civic engagement in situations of high emotion, conflict or controversy”. We’ve worked on issues such as nuclear waste, inner-city school closures, spending priorities for municipal services and budgets, healing and reconciliation for Inuit people, environmental justice, decades-long conflicts with threats of blockades and bombings to hydro stations, community conflict in recovery from massive bush fires and flooding, water as a human right, time deferrals for blood donation by men who have sex with men, and more. These kinds of issues typify the work we do – high emotion and high stakes.

We’ve won awards from the Canadian Association for Municipal Administrators in innovation for citizen engagement and a number of awards from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) for ethical and integral projects that align with the very best public engagement standards, Core

Values and best practices. We honour all voices, and help everyone find a path forward they can live with. We are ethical in our practice and respect and reflect the views of all equally, and we have extensive experience dealing with issues of power, equity and inclusion.

Ensuring we do our best for our projects, our participants, and our clients is something we take very seriously. We acknowledge our mistakes and also our due diligence, having worked closely with the City to ensure we have received input and approval at each step.

What happened with the website?

We chose the WordPress platform for its cost-effectiveness, the functionality it provides to allow citizens to participate in a variety of ways, and to ensure all content from the site can be transferred to the City of Hamilton upon the conclusion of the project. We subcontracted an independent web company to design the site infrastructure. We have used this platform on many projects in the past and have never encountered an issue with either the functionality or security. We were notified of a breach of security early on January 8th and the website was immediately cleaned, removing the malware.

There have been questions about whether using Survey Monkey is compliant with provincial protection and privacy and freedom of information legislation.

We chose Survey Monkey as the survey software for this project as it is a cost-effective, efficient and easy-to-use tool that is regularly used by Canadian governments at all levels to gather input from stakeholders. We do not require participants to reveal personal information, except for voluntary disclosure of their postal code to ensure responses are from Hamilton. We are aware the servers for the data collected by Survey Monkey are located in the US and, prior to selecting Survey Monkey, we asked them to comment on the privacy of personal information issue. Here is their response:

We encourage you to consider that the Patriot Act was enacted primarily in response to incidents of terrorism. We are of the opinion that the privacy risk posed to customers is minimal, as long as they abide by our Terms of Use. In the absence of illegal activity, there is little reason for the US government to make a Patriot Act data request from our data facilities. In fact, over the past ten years they have never done so. Furthermore, we refer you to a news article (<http://www.lfpress.com/news/london/2010/11/26/16338151.html>) relating to the decision of hospitals in Ontario to outsource data processing services to a US company. In that article, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, the Privacy Commissioner for Ontario expressed that she was "not worried" that the hospitals were doing this. The article goes on to say that "Cavoukian conceded there's nothing in Ontario's privacy laws that prevents hospitals or other organizations from outsourcing information. 'We don't want to handcuff organizations from using the services of companies in other jurisdictions with better expertise and who can deliver them at better cost,' she said."

Is the project website accessible for the visually impaired?

In September, the City contacted us to confirm the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) compliance of the website. We asked our programmer if the site met the WCAG 2.0 requirements, which provides guidelines for making websites accessible to people with disabilities. His response to us

was that “*the website meets most, if not all, WCAG guideline criteria. However I ran a few pages through an online checker and it generated over 276 warnings.*” We advised the City of this response and the additional costs that would be incurred to upgrade beyond the minimal requirements. The City advised that no further WCAG upgrades were required.

There were some offensive and inappropriate things posted in the Community priorities tool. How did that happen?

The Community Priorities survey tool asks participants to make a choice between two competing values. Participants are either able to respond to pre-loaded value statements or to post their own. A few citizens posted inappropriate responses. These responses were removed quickly but not before they were noticed and tweeted. We should have ensured that all comments required approval before posting.

Why did you plan a community workshop on January 17 when an important meeting is being held on the proposed Casino?

We set the schedule of events for the *Our Voice. Our Hamilton.* project in the fall of 2012 in cooperation with the City. We were unaware of the conflict of this meeting, and would have recommended moving the event if we had known.